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The City of New York Office of Administration Trials and Hearings. Photos courtesy of Office of Administrative Trials and Hearings

NYC’s Administrative Court Sees Large Influx of New Judges

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State and Local Government

Andrew Denney

Faced with an increased caseload from an uptick in the number of use-of-force complaints referred to New York City’s Office of Administrative Trials and Hearings (OATH) and from other changes in local law, the court has in recent months dramatically increased its roster of judges.

Since March, OATH has added six new judges to the bench, bringing the total number to 17, a 50% increase. The court handles a wide variety of cases involving quality of life in the city, as well as disputes arising from its 320,000-strong municipal workforce.

“OATH’s judges are true professionals who consistently deliver well-reasoned and timely decisions on complex cases with nuanced issues,” OATH Commissioner and Chief Administrative Law Judge Joni Kletter said in a news release. “I am excited by the new judges’ breadth of experience and know that they will fit right in with our stellar team, helping to ensure that all cases continue to be handled professionally and promptly, keeping OATH the preeminent municipal administrative tribunal in the country.”

The newly-minted jurists are:

- Julia Davis, who recently served as the director of research and investigations at the New York City Comptroller’s office and who was previously special counsel and director of annual disclosure at the Conflicts of Interest Board.
- Jonathan Fogel, who recently served as a senior prosecutor at the New York City Civilian Complaint Review Board where he served as counsel during disciplinary tribunal prosecutions against the New York City Police Department officers in the death of Eric Garner and the false arrest of tennis star James Blake.

- Julia Lee, a former Brooklyn prosecutor who previously served as director of annual disclosure and special counsel at the New York City Conflicts of Interest Board.
- Orlando Rodriguez, who worked as an attorney in the New York City Department of Buildings administrative enforcement unit and as a public defender for the Bronx Defenders.
- Christine Stecura, who served as senior counsel in the city Law Department’s Commercial and Real Estate Litigation division and who has also worked for the New York Attorney General’s Office and for Hughes Hubbard & Reed.
- Michael Turilli, who held a post as supervising attorney in the New York City Comptroller’s Bureau of Labor Law.

The judges’ salaries are \$161,195, according to an OATH spokeswoman.

A major driver in the administrative court’s increased caseload comes from the city’s Department of Correction. In the wake of a settlement in *Nunez v. City of New York*—a federal suit that the Legal Aid Society, Emery Celli Brinckerhoff & Abady and Ropes & Gray filed in the Southern District of New York over inmate safety and use-of-force complaints from the city’s jail complex on Rikers Island—more brutality complaints are being referred to OATH.

OATH also has more cases on its plate because the jurisdiction of its Trial Division has been expanded to include more consumer and worker protections cases, as well as mandated safe driving course and vehicle seizures, and the issuance of press credentials.

Annually, OATH’s Trial Division holds about 1,500 settlement conferences and approximately 500 full bench trials.

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